

BLACK HISTORY MONTH and the American Experience

Sportsmanship Grows Riverdale Program



Riverdale Girls Varsity Coach Mario Deleso talks to junior Liz Hampton and senior Lauren Holguin.

Newcomers compete in a tough league

BY SARAH BLOUNT
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Riverdale High School doesn't have an athletic tradition like its 4A team neighbors in Beaverton and Lake Oswego. But the beauty of sportsmanship is that it doesn't really matter when cheers fill the gymnasium.

The 10-year-old southwest Portland school of 250 students is hoping to build its fledgling athletic department, often overshadowed by the school's academic focus, into a program strong enough to contend with established teams in the 2A league.

Head varsity boys basketball coach Michael Harper, ex-Trail Blazer, knowledgeable high school basketball coach, is wrapping up his first season with Riverdale. Harper is key to shaping the future of Maverick athletes.

"Riverdale may be a team to be reckoned with," Harper said. "The most incredible thing is that we have a firm base, and the future

looks bright."

Assistant coach Mark Washington also joined the basketball program this season, bringing his skills and experience as a coach in northeast Portland to the suburban district.

Harper and Washington view their positions as a great challenge, and both coaches are instrumental in establishing a recruitable base, not only in the tiny school district, but surrounding areas.

The girls' varsity team, coached this season by Mario Deleso and Jennifer Card, has faced challenges similar to the boys team, but they also learned a valuable lesson early on: how to reckon with the curse of success. Three years ago they made it to the 1A state playoffs, subsequently getting bumped to 2A. They've been experiencing growing pains in 2A, which is regarded as the most competitive in the state.

Deleso said her girls understand the commitment it takes to be successful. One of those girls is Lauren



The Riverdale High School Boys Basketball team: (Front row, from left) Evan Peterson, Michael Sabol, Zach Chapman, Marshall Fettig and Amandeep Dindral; (second row, from left) Coach Mark Washington, Mike Wance, Willie Durante, Kevin Roberts, Spencer Rozek and manager Willie Stoffer; (third row, from left), Sean Taylor, Coach Michael Harper and Chapin Pier.



Coach Mark Washington brings his Riverdale High School Junior Varsity team together during practice. The players (front row, from left) are Jon Friedman, Jeff Dewitt, Mike Drummand, Marshall Fettig, and Blake Ruble; (back row, from left) Spencer Rozek and Hapreet Dindral.

Holguin, a senior and guard/forward for the Mavericks this season. Holguin said the school's small size has allowed her to play several positions and helped her grow as an athlete.

"It's helped me step up and be confident," she said.

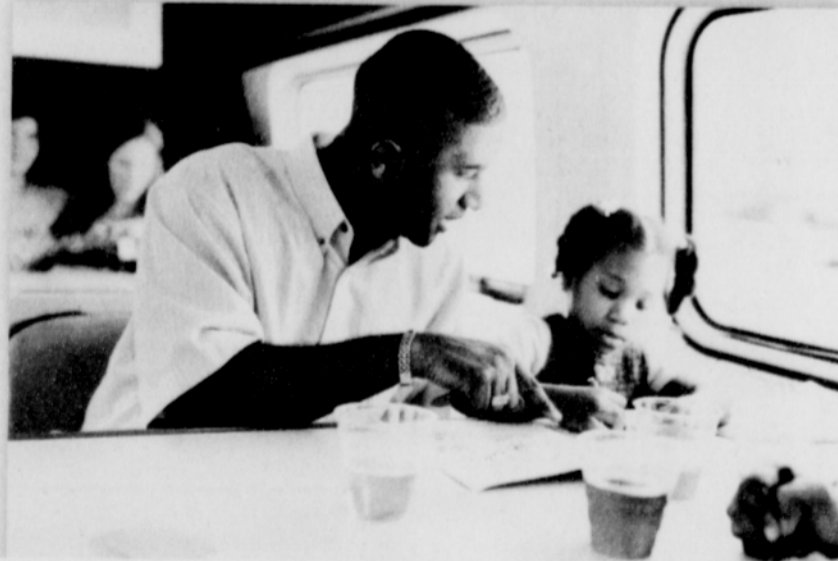
Fellow senior and basketball player Greg Thomason is a prototypical Riverdale student: he possesses athletic talent, but focuses primarily on academics. He expressed faith in his new coach, Harper, because "he's been there."

"He's more vocal," Thomason said. "He'll tell you how he feels and how to get it done."

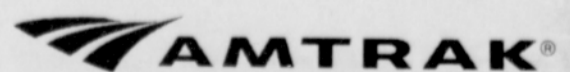
As interest in Maverick sports grows, Harper said his goal is to create a pool of athletes to choose from at the varsity level while adding a freshman team.

"I think we've done a great job in getting the kids to believe hard work does pay off," he said.

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